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## Viewing cable 06BEIRUT2441, TFLE01 MARCH 14 LEADER BOUTROS HARB ALSO URGES

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- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
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Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
<a href="#">06BEIRUT2441</a>	<a href="#">2006-07-22 14:13</a>	<a href="#">2011-08-30 01:44</a>	<a href="#">CONFIDENTIAL</a>	<a href="#">Embassy Beirut</a>

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BEIRUT 002441

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/22/2016  
TAGS: [IS](#) [LE](#) [MOPS](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [SY](#)  
SUBJECT: TFLE01 MARCH 14 LEADER BOUTROS HARB ALSO URGES

## CAUTION ABOUT A CEASE-FIRE WITHOUT TEETH

Classified By: Ambassador Jeffrey Feltman. Reason: Section 1.4 (b).

### SUMMARY

¶1. (C) MP Boutros Harb, a key figure in the pro-reform March 14 movement, believes Hizballah, as of July 21, has not been significantly hurt -- either in its leadership or its military capabilities. Harb said that if Hizballah can reach a cease-fire in its present relatively strong condition, it will have won a major political victory -- and will be very difficult to deal with in the post-conflict phase. Concerning immediate steps, Harb asked the Ambassador to push for the establishment of two humanitarian corridors; one north-south to at least the southern city of Tyre, and a second route by sea out of the port of Beirut. Concerning conditions in Lebanon, Harb was very concerned about confessional tension in the areas of Beirut and Batroun (30 kms north of Beirut) where Shia IDPs from south Lebanon have settled since the outbreak of hostilities. According to Harb, Hizballah flags have been raised at schools and other facilities holding the IDPs, and some IDPs have brandished small arms. Harb implied an effective humanitarian effort is needed as much for social stability as it is for humanitarian relief. End summary.

¶2. (C) In a July 21 meeting with the Ambassador and poloff, MP Boutros Harb, sometimes mentioned (and often by himself) as a candidate for Lebanon's presidency, expressed his conviction that Hizballah's leadership remains intact and united, and its military capabilities relatively undiminished. MP Harb, said that while Hassan Nasrallah was clearly shaken in an interview five days ago, he has regained his footing and projected renewed confidence in a Thursday afternoon interview with Al Jazeera. Without citing sources, Harb stated that Hizballah has had several good days and would like to reach a cease-fire with its political strength still intact.

¶3. (C) Like other members of the pro-reform March 14 coalition, MP Harb said that a cease-fire without significant curtailment of Hizballah's strength would simply establish a dominant position for Hizballah in Lebanon's politics, and set the stage for renewed fighting sometime in the near future.

### POLITICAL ADVICE

¶4. (C) MP Harb recommended that all negotiations to set conditions for a cease-fire, whether brokered by the UN, US, EU, or some combination, must be conducted in a manner that it strengthens the pro-reform Siniora government. Hizballah, of course, must be isolated, he continued, but "we have to use Nabih Berri" to communicate and obtain assurances from Hassan Nasrallah.

¶5. (C) Harb admitted that Speaker Berri has much to gain personally and is ambitious for more power, but said that without Berri, reaching a cease-fire would be most difficult. He advised the US/UN/EU to be "subtle" with Berri, because even though he can serve as the conduit to Nasrallah, he can not "deliver" Hizballah. He also advised negotiators to de-emphasize references to UNSCR 1559, and instead use the language of the 1989 Ta'if Agreement, which would "give us everything we need" -- Hizballah's disarmament, GOL control over all its territory, and provide a path to pluralistic, rather than confessional politics. Ta'if is language that is Arab, acceptable to all Lebanese, whereas UNSCR 1559 is seen as belligerent by some segments of Lebanon and the Arab world.

¶6. (C) Finally, the March 14 leader said that despite the different interpretations of the Shebaa Farms issue, it had to be addressed by the cease-fire. He felt it was a key argument in stripping Hizballah of its most powerful argument

for "resistance." Harb said he understood the necessity of preventing Hizballah from claiming a political victory on the matter, but viewed its importance in the overall debate on Lebanon's security as a primary cease-fire issue.

¶17. (C) Although it was far too early in the process, MP Harb stated that he could even see GOL/GOI dialogue coming out as one of the better results of this situation.

#### HUMANITARIAN EFFORT

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¶18. (C) Reflecting the concerns of his core constituency, Harb insisted that the Christian community of Lebanon was being asked to bear the greatest social and economic burden. His primary concern was the creation of potential flashpoints for communal fighting due to the large movement of Shia IDPs from south Lebanon into north Beirut, Batroun, and other Christian communities in central Lebanon.

¶19. (C) Based on anecdotal evidence that he believes is credible, Harb stated that many of the Shia IDPs have small arms and have not been shy about making statements that they are the "resistance" and "are owed." Harb implied that the humanitarian effort, which is now just forming, must focus on communal stability as well as supplying food, water and other necessities.

#### RECONSTRUCTION

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¶10. (C) Despite the government's checkered record on reconstruction -- following the 1975-1990 civil war, Beirut was successfully rebuilt, but at enormous cost and to the near exclusion of the country's outlying regions -- MP Harb was convinced the Lebanese government could coordinate the expected large number of donors and projects in a transparent and cost-effective manner.

¶11. (C) He said the government would welcome and utilize the expertise available in the international donor community, but hoped that, as with political developments, the reconstruction effort would be used as an opportunity to strengthen the pro-reform government, as well as incorporate badly-needed transparency and efficiency in government institutions.

#### PHYSICAL SAFETY OF SINIORA

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¶12. (C) In concluding his meeting with the Ambassador, MP Harb voiced deep concern over the physical safety of PM Siniora. Harb was certain the Syrian regime would like nothing better than to eliminate democratic Lebanon's most eloquent voice and most admired national leader. He said he had advised the Prime Minister to remain in the relative safety of the Grand Serail, but was wondering if more could be done. Constitutionally, it will be difficult to reconstitute a cabinet if Siniora is killed, since President Lahoud would not sign a cabinet decree unless the cabinet was more strongly tilted in Syria's favor.

FELTMAN